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Strategy for Managing a Forest Recreation Budget  
with  
50% Funding

Linda L. Duffy  
Public Service Staff Officer  
Rogue River National Forest  
P.O. Box 520  
Medford, Oregon 97501  
(503) 776-3742

Clemson Class of 1991

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ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: Linda L. Duffy  
Public Service Staff Officer  
Rogue River National Forest  
P.O. Box 520  
Medford, Oregon 97501  
(503)776-3742

TITLE: Strategy for Managing a Forest Recreation Budget with 50% Funding

ABSTRACT: The Rogue River National Forest experienced a drastic reduction in its Recreation program funding for Fiscal Year 92. A 50% reduction in operations and maintenance programs forced the Forest to rebuild the program from the ground up. Traditional thinking and traditional program management approaches were scrutinized, costs of doing business were analyzed, deliberate interaction with community tourism efforts were initiated, and non-traditional workforce resources were tapped. A "new" Recreation program was designed in a six-month timeframe.

Keywords: Out-year Budget, Workforce, Organization, Tourism, Marketing, Involvement

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

TITLE: Strategy for Managing a Forest Recreation Program with 50% Funding

AUTHOR: Linda L. Duffy  
Public Service Staff Officer  
Rogue River National Forest  
P.O. Box 520  
Medford, Oregon 97501

SUMMARY: Times are tumultuous in the Pacific Northwest Region of the Forest Service, primarily because of the radical changes in workload and organization resulting from major changes in the Timber Management Program in the Region. These changes have been brought about by environmental controversy over federal management activities in old-growth forests and the formal listing by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service of the northern spotted owl as a threatened species under the Endangered Species Act. Additionally, on the Rogue River National Forest, the Recreation program is experiencing tumultuous times as a result of out-year budget planning that backfired, workforce reductions, and increased assessment to the Program for Forest corporate overhead costs. Within a very compressed timeframe of six months, the Forest re-designed and rebuilt its recreation program.

## INTRODUCTION

The Rogue River National Forest is one of the smallest Forests of the Pacific Northwest, located in southwest Oregon. Over the last ten years, until 1989, the Rogue Forest had been one of the highest timber harvest producing Forests in the Region, with an annual allowable sale quantity averaging 190 million board feet (mmbf) and a workforce of about 330 employees. Significant events of the last few years have drastically altered the Forest's future. The northern spotted owl was listed as a threatened species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and court injunctions have kept timber from being harvested. The Forest has continued to prepare timber for sale, 70mmbf in Fiscal Year (FY) 92. Workforce has been reduced to approximately 200 employees. Forecasts for FY93 predict this downward trend to continue with an anticipated timber sale preparation workload of 50mmbf and workforce reduced to 150 permanent employees. The Rogue is one of two Forests in the Region experiencing this drastic downsizing of its organization.

This picture of accelerated change is important to understand when talking about the budget change in the Recreation program, for two reasons. First, several timber mills are closing their operation in the Rogue Valley because of a shortage of timber from federally managed forests. Local communities are in transition from heavy reliance on a timber industry and are desperately searching for stability in this time of change and are turning to tourism as a source of income. Specifically, they are turning to nature-based tourism, to capitalize on the spectacular natural beauty and climate of southwest Oregon. Nature-based tourism was defined by Clemson University faculty member Loren

Toeper as "tourism which is based on the enjoyment of the natural environment". The Rogue Valley is surrounded by lands managed by the National Forest System, Bureau of Land Management, National Park System, Corps of Engineers, State and County Parks Departments.

Secondly, this picture of rapid change is important to understand because of the extreme turmoil and stress Rogue River National Forest employees are facing. The rapid rate of change is causing employees to experience severe anger and denial and grief about the radical cultural change occurring so rapidly within the agency, and about the resulting impacts on their careers and the careers of their co-workers. As workforce reductions began in December of 1991, it was soon realized that the cutbacks affected more than just the timber organization. Employees in the field of recreation soon realized they would be heavily impacted as well. Their budgets were now having to pick up the void left by the reduction of the timber program. 75% of all overhead costs were paid by the timber organization through the years until 1992. In FY92, Recreation's share of overhead costs more than doubled. This was the beginning of radical change within the Recreation program of the Rogue River National Forest.

The next significant emotional event for the Forest's Recreation workforce was the arrival of the FY92 base (start-point) budget allocation from the Regional Office that plummeted their program to almost 50% of historic levels. The anger, denial and grief that ensued had serious implications for the Forest's ability to contribute to local community's efforts for nature based tourism. The Recreation workforce, for a period of time, was emotionally

unable to seek positive solutions for continuing the level of program the communities and public had come to expect.

### Statement of Purpose

The objective of this paper is to explain a strategy for providing recreation opportunities on the Rogue River National Forest given a severe budget dilemma.

The methodology used to design this strategy is a blend of random chaos, excellence in management theory, public involvement, negotiation techniques, and common sense. The Forest's recreation technicians needed leadership and assurance that their program would continue to build upon past accomplishments.

The following assumptions were made:

1. Barring the public from access to their National Forest was not acceptable
2. Anyone who could possibly assist in problem-solving would be given the opportunity to do so before decisions were finalized,
3. Integration with other recreation providers of the Rogue Valley is essential,
4. Creativity for new ways of doing recreation business is emphasized.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### OUT-YEAR BUDGETING

Recreation Program Development and Budgeting, by Gerry Farmer, links the Resources Planning Act to Land Management Planning and then to the Budget process. Farmer describes the ten step budget process, the theory of start-point planning, and the Washington Office role in the budget process. This information is current with a discussion of the President's Initiative, the America's Great Outdoors program budget for FY92-94.

### MARKETING NATIONAL FOREST RECREATION

John Syme's Recreation in the Forest Service: A Marketing Opportunity, and Conceptual Framework for Forest Recreation Marketing in the Public Sector identified marketing as an effective management tool for meeting public recreation needs with emphasis on customer satisfaction. Syme discusses two concepts of marketing that were incorporated in this project: Service Marketing, i.e., outdoor recreation opportunities, and Idea Marketing, i.e., issues. Idea Marketing was used to involve the public in making choices and changes in the Forests' '92 Recreation program. A Comparative Profile of Southwestern Oregon Visitors provided current information about southwest Oregon visitor characteristics, characteristics of their trips to the area, and information about their travel habits.

### CONCEPTUAL BLOCKBUSTING

Vertical slice involvement and extending the recreation workforce are two non-traditional methods the Forest Recreation workforce discovered through spending time with Roger von Oech's books Whack on the Side of the Head and Kick in the Seat of the Pants.

### CONCESSIONS MANAGEMENT

A briefing paper prepared by John Shilling was an excellent resource for learning the very basics about the origins of concessions in National Forest Management as well as a reference for legal authority, fee systems, and Forest Service Manual references. Pros and Cons of Concessions on the National Forests provided suggestions about avoiding concession pitfalls and suggestions for improving concession management.

## DESIGNING A NEW FUTURE

The Rogue River National Forest is 630,000 acres located in two mountain ranges, the lush green Cascade Mountains of the eastern half of the Forest and the rugged granitic soils of the Siskiyou make up the western half. A major travel corridor, Interstate 5, intersects the Forest making this a "corridor as well as a destination" Forest according to the Comparative Profile of Southwest Oregon Visitors, a study conducted by Southern Oregon State College in the summer of 1991. Considered to be rural for the most part, the Forest is located six hours north of California's San Francisco, five hours south of Portland, Oregon, three hours from Oregon's coast and one hour from Crater Lake National Park. Marketing research conducted for the Forest by Chris Friend in 1991 found that visitation to the Forest is primarily from urban dwellers of California's Bay Area, Oregon residents, and pass-through traffic received from visitors to Crater Lake National Park. The Forest has six major overnight facilities that are full beyond occupancy capacity on major summer holidays. Occupancy at those sites other than holiday weekends, and occupancy of the remaining 37 developed sites, is approximately 50% during the May-September season. Word of mouth is the primary marketing tool used.

The Forests' Recreation program has not done much to attract internal attention to itself for one reason or another. Budgeted comfortably, the program built to a level in 1991 where current year work was up to date and significant accomplishment was made on backlog maintenance. Quality of design and facility care was paramount; if work could not be done in a quality way it was not done at all. District Rangers were familiar with on-the-ground

activities but not involved in visioning, strategic planning or budgeting for the program. Visitation to the program by Regional Directors was not a routine part of doing business. Contribution to local tourism efforts happened without strategy; the Forest's Recreation program existed in a very laid-back, comfortable and quiet style.

The months of October 1991 through April 1992 shattered the tranquility the Recreation workforce had come to know in their jobs on the Rogue River Forest.

#### Budget Gamble Backfires

"A 1989 gamble with it's recreation budget has failed to pay off for the Rogue River National Forest, leaving it unable to maintain many of the recreation sites favored by local residents", reported the Medford Mail Tribune in a front page story of its sunday edition newspaper (see next page for reproduction of news article).

# Budget gamble backfires

By MARK FREEMAN  
Mail Tribune Staff Writer

A 1989 gamble with its recreation budget has failed to pay off for the Rogue River National Forest, leaving it unable to maintain many of the recreation sites favored by local residents.

Rogue Forest officials bet three years ago that extra money would be available for recreation in 1992, but that bet has left this year's budget about half of last year's level.

The biggest cuts are in money to clean and maintain campgrounds and picnic areas, especially in some tucked-away spots, forest managers say.

Rogue Forest officials responsible for the 1992 budget say their decision in 1989 to set a low base budget for recreation and hope for extra money was part of a budget strategy that had worked for years.

But that strategy backfired when extra maintenance money wasn't available and tighter restrictions were imposed on how national forests can shuffle money, leaving the Rogue Forest short-changed in one of its most critical budget areas.

"We never experienced that before, and we were relying on what has worked for us in the past," says Steve Deitemeyer, who was the Rogue Forest supervisor when those decisions were made.

"We did not intentionally down-play recreation in any way, or not try to fund it appropriately. What happened, that was unforeseen to us."

Forest managers are turning to local volunteer organizations to pick up where the Rogue

Forest's budget left off, by cleaning and maintaining many of the recreation facilities for the next two years.

The Rogue Forest's new head of recreation also plans not to gamble so highly this year when the national forest sets its budget requests for 1994.

"What we saw happen with '92 made us realize that we can't let that happen in '94," says Linda Duffy, the public service staff officer who now oversees the Rogue's recreation program.

The Rogue Forest gambled the same way other national forests in Oregon and Washington did, but the Rogue turned out the biggest loser.

Its 43 percent budget cut was the highest among all Northwest national forests, and substantially higher than its two neighbors — the Winema and Siskiyou national forests.

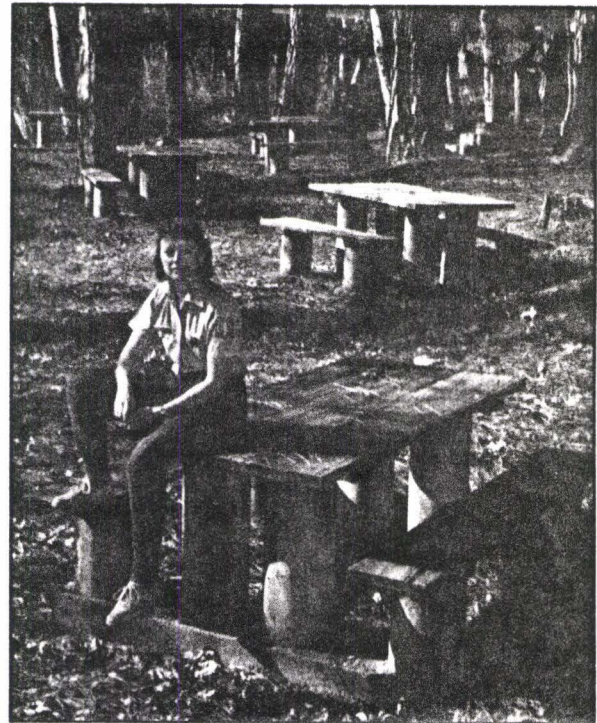
The Winema's recreation budget dropped 13 percent, while the Siskiyou's budget dipped 5 percent.

The Rogue Forest's recreation budget had always hovered a little under \$1 million, but this year's budget ended up at \$405,000. The operation and maintenance fund dropped from \$270,000 last year to about \$70,000 this year.

"We're clearly aware of the effects of this budget process and we're looking at ways of making operations and maintenance more visible," says Deitemeyer, who now works in Washington D.C., overseeing the Forest Service's developed recreation program.

The problem can be traced to initial budget

see COSTS, Page 5A



Mail Tribune / Jim Craven

**NOT OPENING** — Linda Duffy, public service staff officer for the Rogue River National Forest, says this picnic area at McKee Bridge in the Applegate Valley will have "non-opening" status.

## Costs

from Page 1A

proceedings the Rogue Forest conducted in the fall of 1989.

The Rogue Forest had a budget ceiling of \$10.5 million, but about 60 percent paid for overhead costs as well as major programs like timber sales, Duffy says.

That left about \$4 million to be carved into base budgets for several other programs including recreation, fish, wildlife, range, and soils, she says.

Typically, national forests need to set these base budgets three years ahead of time. Forest managers call the base budgets "start-point levels," and they are based in part on how much extra federal money is anticipated.

The feeling among many forest-watchers was that recreation programs were going to be funded strongly in the 1990s. The Rogue, which had based recreation budgets as high as \$1.03 million in 1990, set the 1992 base at \$388,000.

Also added was a priority list of additional requests that incrementally brought the forest's operations and maintenance budget back to historic levels, Deitemeyer says.

But between the time managers set the Rogue Forest's base budget and the time the final budget was enacted recently, several key factors changed that "sure didn't help them out," says Lyle Lavery, the Forest Service's recreation director in Oregon and Washington.

Extra recreation money was available for Oregon and Washington, but it went mostly for such things as new facilities construction and wild-and-scenic river planning, Lavery says.

The Rogue is a highly developed recreation forest with 43 sites, so it was a low priority for new construction.

Moreover, national forests are no longer allowed to shuffle recreation money from one program to another, so the Rogue received only a slight increase from its \$388,000 start-point level to its final recreation budget level of about \$405,000, Lavery says.

"The start-point levels are critical, absolutely," he says.

If the Rogue hadn't cut its start-point level, the program would not be in its current state, Lavery says.

Rogue officials say that trying to anticipate where extra money will be available is simply the nature of drafting national forest budgets three years in advance.

"Apparently, it's like playing poker," Duffy says. "You bet where the money is most likely going to be, and hope that's where you most likely are going to get it."

"If we were taking a gamble, that's too deep a cut," she says.

The deepest cuts were in administration and maintenance of developed facilities, and trails.

The trails program budget dropped almost in half, while the maintenance and development

budget shrank by about two-thirds.

Deep cuts also occurred in the workforce, which went from nine full-time and 17 seasonal workers last year to the equivalent of 5.5 full-time and nine seasonals, Duffy says.

These cuts have left the Rogue Forest's recreation workforce too small to maintain campgrounds and picnic areas this summer, Duffy says.

Campgrounds won't be closed, but Duffy calls their status as "non-opening," meaning they won't be gated but likely not maintained near the level people are used to at national forests.

The Rogue River's Recreation budget which used to hover just under \$1 million, dropped to \$405,000 for 1992 because of a strategy used by the Forest 3 years ago during the out-year budgeting process. The Forest intentionally set an artificially low start-point budget for Recreation and instead funneled some of that start-point funding toward other programs. This was done because the Forest Service agency in 1988 renewed its emphasis on Recreation with the implementation of the National Recreation Strategy and the America's Great Outdoors programs. At the time there was an understanding that new money would be available beyond start-point funding levels to implement these programs at the Forest level. The Forest figured extra money would be available to make up for Recreation programs not funded by the start-point budget.

That plan backfired. Though extra money was available in the Pacific Northwest for new facilities construction and wild and scenic river planning, nothing was there for administration and maintenance programs - two big portions of the Rogue Forest's budget.

#### A New "Recreation" Organization

A combination of the budget plan that backfired plus the increased assessment to the Recreation program for its share of overhead expenses left the Forest's Recreation program with 50% of its 1991 budget level and a workforce that would also be reduced to half its historic level.

The first organizational change in the Recreation program took place even before news of the Recreation budget arrived on the Forest. It occurred as a result of the overall Forest reduction driven by the changing timber workload. The Recreation Staff Officer who managed the Recreation program from the Forest

Supervisor's Office transferred from the Forest to a new position. The Forest determined a savings of overhead costs could be made by combining the vacant Staff position with another Forest Staff position. The combination was made with the Forest Public Affairs program and the new organization became known as the "Public Service" organization. After nine months in place, this partnership "has proven to be a very effective combination of communication, people relationships, customer service and resource management," Lyle Laverty, Director of Recreation and John Marker, Director of Public Affairs stated to the Rogue River Forest Supervisor in February 1992.

District level organizational changes resulting from finalized recreation program goals and reduced budget are proving to be very traumatic for the tenured Recreation workforce. These reductions are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

**Recreation FY92 Budget and Staffing Reductions**

<u>Ranger District</u>	<u>Facilities \$</u>	<u>Trails \$</u>	<u>Staff</u>
Applegate	-34%	-23%	-1/2 Recreation Mgr, GS11 -2 Seasonals, GS7 -1 Temporary, GS5
Ashland	-35%	-20%	-1/2 Recreation Mgr, GS11 -3 Temporaries, GS5
Butte Falls	-11%	- 9%	-1/2 Recreation Mgr, GS11 -1 Seasonal, GS7 -2 Temporaries, GS5
Prospect	-38%	-30%	-1/2 Recreation Mgr, GS11 -1 Seasonal, GS5 -1 Temporary, GS5
Forest Supervisor's Office - Recreation	-35%	-30%	-1/2 Staff Officer, GS12 -1 Recreation Plnr, GS11 -1 Landscape Archt, GS9

The reduction of the Recreation workforce essentially brought the Forest's traditional Recreation program to its knees. Because budgets had generally been ample, it was traditional thinking in program planning to budget the workforce first. Workload was expected to follow. Workload was determined by workforce hired. A critical element was quickly realized during the crisis over the 50% budget reduction. The Forest did not have a clear financial picture of its costs of doing on-the-ground Recreation business. The initial reaction by the tenured Recreation group was to simultaneously reduce work by half if workforce was reduced by half.

The Chicken or the Egg?

Which comes first, the chicken or the egg? This was a question hotly debated as the Forest struggled with the need to re-design the Recreation program, from the ground up, essentially. Which should be used as the foundation for the re-designed program, the existing workforce or a Recreation program vision (and program of work to be accomplished)? Traditionally, the Forest Recreation allocation process followed the theory that once the budget was known, workforce hiring decisions were made and program of work decisions followed with remaining budget. This traditional thinking brought with it a knee-jerk reaction to reduce the program of work to the same degree as workforce reductions.

Larry Hensen, Associate Deputy Chief of the National Forest System presented the issue of program accountability to the 1991 Clemson University Short Course students. Hensen talked about Recreation budget trends. He said

National Forest Recreation budgets are showing the following trend of allocation:

3-4% allocated to Washington Office (trend down from past),  
8-9% allocated to Regional Offices (trend is steady),  
32-40% allocated to Supervisor's Offices (trend shows increase),  
48-57% allocated to Ranger Districts (trend is down).

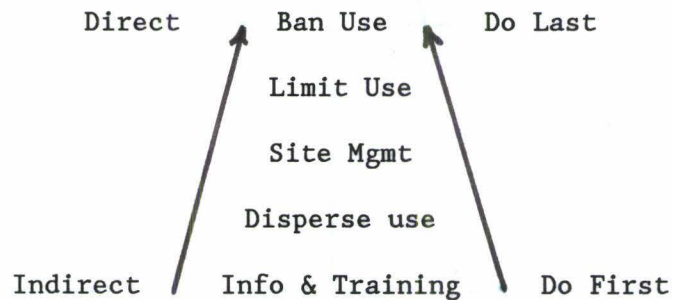
Hensen described measures for ensuring accountability for work produced that are being implemented in order to track exactly how dollars are being spent. The intent, Hensen said, is to assure Congress and the American public that federal dollars are actually getting to the ground for program accomplishment, and not channeled for support of a top-down organization. The FY92 budget began this tracking by restricting National Forests from shuffling money from one program area to another as had been common practice in the past. To Recreation folks on the Forest accustomed to past spending practices, this restriction further impacted their program flexibility. Gerry Farmer, budget specialist in Recreation, Wilderness and Cultural Resources in the Washington Office validated Hensen on the issue of accountability in his paper titled Recreation Program Development and Budget. With Gerry Farmer's paper in hand and a painful assessment of the harsh results of their traditional approach to their budget dilemma, the Forest Recreation group began a process of thinking differently about what they wanted from their Recreation program.

#### Traditional Thinking in Non-Traditional Times

The traditional approach of funding workforce first followed by workload planning left the Forest capable of operating just six of its 43 developed facilities and less than 30% of its trail system. Installing gates and closing facilities with explanatory signs such as "this facility closed due to budget cutbacks" was the initial reaction. Bill Hammitt, faculty member of Clemson University in the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Management Department described

this approach as a "direct, do last" action. Hammitt outlined a conceptual framework for visitor management activities as follows:

Figure 2



Direct management activities are the most restrictive and regulatory and should be implemented as a last resort according to Hammitt.

#### BREAKING TRADITION AND DESIGNING A NEW FUTURE

Because traditional thinking resulted in a program of such significant negative impacts to the public and local communities, problem-solving responsibility was expanded from Ranger District Recreation managers and their field technicians to include a vertical slice of Forest Service decision-makers. Each District Ranger, the Regional Directors of Recreation and Public Affairs, and recreation specialists from the Washington Office became involved in understanding the gravity of the Rogue's situation and involved in conceptual blockbusting and solution-seeking. Other southwest Oregon recreation providers, the business community and key opinion leaders of the area became involved as did County Commissioners and local Congressional staff. Throughout the months of October through March, much discussion took

place about the role of the Rogue River National Forest in providing outdoor recreation opportunities in southwest Oregon.

Below is a critical path and strategies used to design a new Recreation program for FY92:

**Strategy for Involving RO, Rangers, Recreation Workforce and Community  
to develop a supported  
FY92 Forest Recreation Program**

**Objectives for the Forest's FY92 Recreation Program:**

- \* Contribute to the economic stability and diversification of SW Oregon communities;
- \* Provide a variety of recreation opportunities that best meet the current demands of recreationists (mix of facilities and services) consciously using the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum for decision making;
- \* Leverage budget and workforce through volunteers, partnerships, cooperative agreements with other agencies, community organizations and individuals;
- \* Efficiently maintain as many existing facilities as possible without stretching resources so thin (in attempt to keep ALL open) that maintenance/service is at mediocre standard.

**Critical Path of Program Implementation:**

July - House mark-up of 92 Budget; Allocation to Forest in Recreation Operations down 47% of FY91 allocation.

Directors of Recreation and Public Affairs visit Forest, introduction to Forest's merged Rec/PA program: Public Services

August - Forest Management Team meets at Ashland Hills to set priorities for budget and workforce.

Consensus among FMT reached to tentatively distribute recreation operations \$ by priority site/season PAOT x four-year average unit cost.

Allocation of tentative budget with involvement of Recreation workforce.

October - Directors of Recreation and Public Affairs visit Forest and meet with key community leaders about role of recreation tourism in economy of SW Oregon and contributions (current and potential) Forest makes to area tourism.

November - Rangers meet to focus on Forest-wide vision and strategy for Recreation, brainstorm problem-solving approaches to the severe budget downsizing, take ownership of SO-to-District allocation process and District overhead assessment priorities. Rangers agree on philosophy of keeping all sites/facilities open and operating if at all possible. Closure of facilities will be a last resort. The deciding factor forcing closure will be monitoring that reflects

below standard maintenance levels, poor public service, accelerated resource damage.

Rangers accepted the task to become actively involved with their Rec staffs to devise FY92 action plans that explore a variety of scenarios for partnership involvement in execution of their program.

Forest Plan monitoring worksheets developed for program implementation.

January - Rangers and Recreation workforce meet to fold individual District action plans into comprehensive Forest-wide program for FY92.

Final budget is on Forest and allocations to Districts finalized. No drastic deviations from tentative anticipated.

Develop Recreation Marketing Plan specifically for FY92 program. Involve expertise of SOREDI, SORSI, and SOVA. (Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc., Southern Oregon Regional Services Institute, and Southern Oregon Visitors Association.)

February - Directors of Recreation and Public Affairs visit, review strategy of implementing the FY92 Rec budget, assist with political and key community briefings.

March/April - Conduct public involvement for reaction, information. Purpose: formally notify general public of changes in traditional program, finetune FY92, gain information/lay groundwork for FY93 program.

Make decision about use of Concession operation as a management tool for FY92. If affirmative, prepare prospectus packages, advertise and select by third week of March.

Hold Recreation team building and FY93-95 visioning workshop. Workforce and Rangers begin strategizing about FY93 budget allocation priorities and process.

May - Directors of Recreation and Public Affairs and respective Deputy Regional Foresters visit for briefing on problem-solving approach, solutions and resulting program. Purpose: background information for Regional Forester in event of political pressure about changed recreation budget/program/service priorities.

September - Monitoring review of Recreation program by Directors of Recreation and Public Affairs and respective Deputy Regional Foresters.

Allocation of tentative FY93 budget.

### Vertical Slice Involvement

The vertical slice involvement, participation at all levels of the organization, was critical in designing the FY92 program to ensure that the Rogue's situation was clear and not a surprise to anyone in positions to influence and assist financially and politically. District Ranger involvement proved to be extremely valuable for Forest-wide visioning, and strategic thinking as well as obstacle-clearing for their Recreation staff.

Involvement with community business leaders lent excellence in management theory and common-sense business practices such as marketing for customer satisfaction, assessing costs of doing business, and possibilities for entrepreneurs in National Forest Recreation management. Interaction with other recreation providers stretched Forest thinking into different ways of doing traditional business ranging from facility management to sharing workforce resources.

Two goals were agreed upon with District Ranger and Forest Supervisor involvement: 1. maximize dollars to project level work (which resulted in a significant reduction of historic Recreation workforce),

2. open and maintain as many facilities as possible.

This combination created what seemed to be an impossibility, the workload was far too great for the remaining workforce to accomplish alone; the Recreation organization began looking for ways to extend its workforce without taxing their limited budget.

### Extending the Recreation Workforce

The Forest's Recreation organization which now includes District Rangers, began extending horizontally through the organization, by involving the

Districts' Public Affairs workforce. A partnership has been created between the two functional groups to jointly manage the communication tools Recreation traditionally has taken sole responsibility for, such as Recreation Opportunity Guides, maps, brochures, etc. Following is an outline of the public information methods used to communicate the Forest's Recreation Program. Communication changes to make in FY92 were decided upon and Public Affairs activity assisted Recreation with this program of work.

#### Recreation Communication Tools the Forest Uses

<u>MEDIA</u>	<u>Audience (Eng./Span.)</u>	<u>Objective</u>
Weekly Recreation Report	Tempo Readers	Status & Features
Monthly Media Outlook	General	Features
Holiday News Releases	Holiday Rec. Seekers	Ideas, Info
Interviews	General	As Requested
M. CofC Newsletter	Business	Forest Niche in SW Ore. (features)
Interactive Video Info System	General	Info, Ideas

#### FY92 Changes to Implement:

##### 1. Recreation Report -

A recreation feature including photo will be submitted to the Rogue Valley's weekly entertainment guide on a rotating basis from each unit. A topic listing and schedule will be developed. A campground status report will appear along with the feature story, but will only be updated if changes occur. Naturalist program schedules will be included.

##### 2. Interactive Video Info System -

Dedicate one of the Forest's three units to being mobile; tentative schedule: Spring-Jackson Co. Fair; Summer - McKenzie Outfitter's; Winter - Rogue Valley Mall.

##### 3. Medford Chamber of Commerce Business Review Newsletter -

Rangers responsible for writing article twice/year. Need to develop topic listing and schedule. Public Affairs: editing & submission to Business Review.

<u>PUBLICATIONS</u>	<u>Audience (Eng./Span.)</u>	<u>Objective</u>
CG Guide	Gen. Camping	Info, Status
ROG's	Trails Info.	Interest Specific
Chamber Directory	Business	Forest Niche in SW Oregon
SOVA Guide		
Marketing for Volunteers		
Special Programs	Gen. Public	Info

FY92 Changes to Implement:

1. CG Guide -

Keep exactly as is, except, include highlighted statement about "services may not be at the level stated, please contact the Ranger District...".

2. ROGS -

Continue to use. Disclaimer on bottom re: trail not maintained to standard, trees across trail, etc., let public know what conditions to expect. Mention volunteer program and how to become a volunteer.

3. Chamber Directory (\$1,000) and SOVA (\$600) Guide -

Stay in both or go with just one? (we chose SOVA over Directory).

4. Special Program Announcement Format -

Will be developed '92 - used to inform public of "special" programs (like nature talks, campfire programs), RO has asked us to conform these announcements to the Visual Management Manual.

SIGNS

Audience (Eng./Span.)

Objective

Campground

On-Site

Info, Regulations

Trails

On-Site

Info, Regulations

Roads

Partner/Volunteer Recog.

Recognition

FY92 Changes to Implement:

1. CG's -

Have quality, informative signs in good condition. State which other options available: nearest open CG, Trail behind CG still open? Let public know situation. Remind people of dispersed opportunities (use ROG's).

2. Trails -

Utilize news media to inform public about trail conditions before the signs are installed; try to keep barrier-free sites open; identify which signs will be removed; increase trail registers/cards, do follow-up. Sign maintenance - insure quality all season.

3. Recognition Signing will be needed - concessionaire, volunteer groups, etc..

PERSONAL CONTACT

AUDIENCE (ENG./SPAN.)

OBJECTIVE

Presentations

General, Specific Interest

Info, answer questions

Field

Site Specific

Info, Q's, regs, cleaning

Customer Service Cards

Feedback

Reception & Office Hours

Office, Phone

Provide quality public info

Public Meetings

Answer

Questions

Vol's/Co-op Workdays

User Groups/Others

Work, network

Various User Groups &

In & Out of Agency

Network, inform

Interagency Groups

Special Use Permittees

Special Events

Nat'l Fishing Week

Bike Races

## Ski Events

Local Officials  
Local Businesses

### FY92 Changes to Implement:

#### 1. Presentations -

Nice to do, low priority? We support and accommodate volunteer presenters (campfire programs, etc..) Develop key contact list of community people who make presentations on natural resource topics. Similar to Environmental Ed Catalog.

#### 2. Customer Service Cards -

Appropriate for site or activity specific to gauge how we are doing.

#### 3. Reception -

This is a customer service issue. Problems: distractions of other resource work interfering with customer service and responsiveness.

John Syme, faculty member of Clemson University talks about a concept of "de-marketing" in his paper titled Conceptual Framework for Forest Recreation Marketing in the Public Sector, September 1989. De-marketing, according to Syme, is the process of reducing or transferring customer demand. This concept will be incorporated in management of the recreation communication tools for the first time in FY92. Limited budget and workforce may result in the need to direct visitors away from sites, trails, and other facilities that cannot be maintained to historical standards.

Probably the most controversial method of extending the recreation workforce explored by the Forest was the possibilities for concessionaires to operate some of the Forest's campgrounds through special use permit administration. Recreation Managers, their field technicians and District Rangers alike were adamantly opposed to the idea. Two reasons were given for resisting the idea: 1) no one in the private sector would be interested because our profit margin is so low, and 2) no one in the private sector can care for the public and the facilities as well as we can. Faced with the bottomline decision to close 37 of 43 developed sites and without additional

help we were forced to check out private sector interest for operating the six highly developed, high cost, profit-making campgrounds. The newspaper article that ran in the Rogue Valley area newspapers was picked up by the wire service and ran in newspapers across the country is shown in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3

## Forest Service seeks companies to run sites

By MARK FREEMAN  
Mail Tribune Staff Writer

Private companies could end up operating five of the Rogue River National Forest's key recreation sites under a proposal designed to help forest officials grapple with budget cuts.

Officials are looking for concessionaires to run Union Creek, Fish Lake and other popular Rogue Forest camping and recreation spots for the next three years. It's part of an effort to keep all such Rogue Forest sites open despite the loss of 43 percent of the agency's campground budget.

Forest officials want groups or businesses strong in hospitality to pay the government for the right to operate one or more of the sites. They say the quality of management could slip if the Rogue Forest tries to run them next year with fewer people and less money.

"It's time to find out if there's someone in the valley who can pick up that end of the business we don't have the people to do," said Linda Duffy, the Rogue's public service staff officer. "I think it'll be a good opportunity for somebody."

That opportunity could mean making money from visitor fees, which could increase under the Rogue's plans, Duffy said.

"We don't want to commercialize these facilities," Duffy said. "We want them to stay within the traditional character of the Forest Service."

Similar concessionaire programs are popular and successful in many eastern states, she says. A concessionaire operates facilities at Diamond Lake in the Umpqua National Forest.

Some federal recreation managers believe looking into the concessionaire business for the Rogue Forest is not only smart, but could also be advantageous to the forest and its campers.

"It's certainly a good business move, regardless of whether we're up or down (in the budget)," said Gary Bartlett, the Rogue Forest's architect. "It makes sense to look at it."

The Rogue Forest will start actively campaigning for possible concessionaires next week, Duffy said. Officials mailed a letter Friday to groups they believe may be in-

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## Forest

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terested in running a campground.

The Rogue Forest turned to this program after its recreation budget, usually hovering just under \$1 million, was dropped 43 percent in the latest congressional budget proposals, Duffy said.

The drop is one of the more severe in the Pacific Northwest, where most national forests are now suffering budget cuts in recreation programs, Duffy said.

The cuts stem from two basic reasons tied to the region's timber sale programs, said Gary Adams, the budget coordinator for recreation programs in national forests in Oregon and Washington.

The forests are bound to produce a certain amount of timber for sale, and increased environmental work — such as intense studies and appeals challenges — is making it more expensive to produce timber sales, Adams said.

Also, income from logging is down, so recreation programs must now help pay more of the forests' fixed costs, like electricity and rent, that used to be handled primarily by the timber programs, Adams said.

Forest managers hope private individuals, companies, corporations, local government groups or organizations can help fill the voids by becoming concessionaires to operate one or more facilities.

The Rogue Forest charges \$5 to \$7 a night for the first vehicles in its developed campgrounds, while the day-use area at Hart-Tish Park costs \$2 per vehicle.

Duffy said these fees could increase slightly by going to private operation.

Interested people are urged to check out the campgrounds before they are covered with snow and talk to the various ranger districts about their operations, Duffy said. Special proposal packets will be released in February, and interested people will have 30 days to put together their proposals on how they would run the campground and how much money they'd pay the Rogue Forest for that chance, she said.

The Rogue Forest intends to award special use permits in March for the five sites. The permits will be for three one-year terms, subject to annual review and renewal.

Concessionaires are responsible for collecting camping fees, providing insurance, supplies and maintenance, and enforcing all national forest campground rules.

Private sector response to the opportunity was overwhelming. Within one week of the news article, a mailing list of more than 80 potential concessionaires was compiled. People from all over the State of Oregon, people from California, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Vermont and Connecticut responded to the news article. That level of interest invalidated the Recreation groups' first reason for adamantly opposing to the idea of utilizing concessionaires. The second reason, the ability of the private sector to care for the public and facilities, could not be evaluated until they were given an opportunity to apply for the "job". The Forest Recreation group mobilized itself to prepare three prospectus packages for concessionaire operation of not just six, but fourteen developed campgrounds. Nancy Schuster and Gaylord Stavely of the National Forest Recreation Association presented the Clemson Short Course 1991 students with a paper titled Pros and Cons of Concessions on the National Forests that was an extremely valuable reference tool for designing the framework for these prospectus packages. Their paper helped us avoid some pitfalls we might have unknowing incorporated into the prospectus'. Jim Culbert of the Plumas National Forest in California shared his experience with prospectus writing and his very successful concession operations of the Hallsted Campground Complex on the Quincy Ranger District of the Plumas National Forest. Jim traveled to the Rogue Forest on three occasions to familiarize the Forest with concession operations, to assist with developing and writing the prospectus packages, and to assist with reviewing the private sectors' responses to our packages. The review is a three day effort, and is in progress at the time of this writing, so the answer to concerns about ability of the private sector to care for the public and facilities is not yet known.

The driving force behind finding out whether or not concession operations are a viable management tool for the Forest to consider was that, with the private sector operating our high-cost facilities, the recreation work force would then be free to operate the remaining 37 at an acceptable standard. Left on its own, the Recreation group would not have had the initiative, nor time to explore this management tool. With an extension into a different functional organization on the Forest, the Recreation program received research, leadership, business acumen, and top quality prospectus packages from partnership with the Forests' Budget and Fiscal Officer.

The Recreation organization found itself in a very peculiar position as a result of joining in partnership with local newspaper and television media representatives. After the Budget Gamble Backfires story aired (the first time the Forest went "public" with its budget dilemma), local media kept in contact and offered to help in whatever way they could. A comment made by a frustrated field technician caught their attention; "we just can't do all the work ourselves, the workload is too great and we can't hire the workforce we're accustomed to." The local reporter of the Medford Mail Tribune ran this story that brought in more offers of help than the Forest could use:

Figure 4

## Rogue Forest hopes for help from volunteers

Tucked-away campsites and favorite afternoon picnic grounds may be left neglected this summer as the Rogue River National Forest struggles to keep its recreation program running.

Forest officials are hoping civic groups will take responsibility for cleaning and maintaining some sites, while a boosted share-host program will allow others to adopt their favorite campgrounds.

Forest officials also hope for some fundraising campaigns as workers seek ways to adequately maintain most of the Rogue's 43 developed sites.

"We know what we want to do, we're just trying to figure out how it should be done," says Linda Duffy, the Rogue's public service staff officer.

"We're not trying to give the impression that we're shirking any of our responsibility," she says. "We feel bad that it's going to happen and we're going to do things to keep it minimal."

The Rogue Forest is now soliciting private organizations and companies to serve as concessionaires and operate six of its most popular sites.

These are Fish Lake and Doe Point campgrounds at Fish Lake, the Farewell Bend and Union Creek campgrounds near Prospect, Squaw Lakes Campground in the Applegate Valley, and Hart-Tish Park Picnic Area and boat ramp at Applegate Lake.

Whiskey Springs Campground southeast of Butte Falls had been a candidate for concessionaires, but was removed from the list because it doesn't make money like the other sites.

That leaves 37 sites to be maintained by the Rogue Forest staff. Duffy says 12 to 15 of those would likely go without maintenance, but those would be determined by who comes forward to adopt which sites, she says.

A campground host would take on a caretaker's role at the campground all summer, greeting guests, picking up garbage and maintaining the facility as well as a U.S. Forest Service "presence," Duffy says.

Volunteer groups could patrol sites regularly, she says.

Individuals, families, organizations, special interest groups, and businesses came forward to adopt campgrounds, maintain trails, repair and paint. The Forest actually turned away some offers of help because the Recreation organization is stretched so thin from the workforce reductions that project organization, volunteer training and supervision could not be pulled together immediately. The public response was unexpected and heartwarming, a definite morale boost to a team of people who desperately needed the boost.

#### IMPLEMENTATION OF NON-TRADITIONAL METHODS

The Forest's Recreation workforce has moved through their crisis over the budget dilemma and the traditional solutions that came with their initial reaction. Some solutions to immediate and significant problems were found through use of non-traditional thinking, involvement of the upper levels of the Forest Service organization, interaction with community leaders and other recreation providers, extending its workforce horizontally through the Forest and with help from the public. But this was all done in a very compressed timeframe, six months, without taking time to deal with the human emotions of anger, denial and grief that came with the dramatic change in their program. Additionally, they fear a significant change in their traditional roles with the need to rely on others (concessionaires, volunteers). They fear their jobs are changing from hands-on field representatives to office-bound administrators. This is a great stressor for most of the remaining veteran Recreation workforce.

### Critical Incident Stress

A psychologist with the National Forest Employee Assistance program observed that the Forests' Recreation workforce is experiencing typical human reactions to important incidents, and recommended that time be taken to deal with the program changes in a critical incident stress management style.

An April 1992 team building meeting is scheduled to assist the Recreation workforce with moving beyond the stages of grief, and to rebuild itself as a new team. The membership of the Forests' Recreation team had remained unchanged for nearly eight years. Workforce reductions changed the tenured membership drastically. Also the group will begin to create personal visions and corporate visions for the Forests FY93-95 Recreation program.

### FUTURE WORK

#### Information and Training

Information and training workshops for concessionaires, volunteers and campground hosts will take place prior to campgrounds openings Memorial weekend. Forest history, policy, current management issues, environmental education, and Forest visitor profile information will be shared.

## Forest Marketing Plan & Customer Satisfaction

In 1990, a Forest marketing research project was initiated that resulted in the completion of a Situation Assessment. Progress was slow on this research project because of confusion about how to apply principles of for-profit business marketing to a federal, non-profit agency. John Syme's work, Recreation in the U.S. Forest Service: A Marketing Opportunity, and Franklin Lewis' work titled: A Process to Develop a National Forest Recreation Marketing Plan, clears a great deal of the confusion and will enable the Forest to move ahead with finishing research and preparing a marketing plan. This project will be completed through the Fall of 1992 through an internship with Southern Oregon State College.

Monitoring and evaluation of visitor response to the FY92 program is an element of the market research project is needed to help guide activities for FY93 and beyond. Important to know is forest visitor response to private sector and public involvement in Recreation program management. On the following page is a mid-summer newspaper article reporting on camper reactions to the use of concessionaires for campground operation.

## Focus

# Company offers cleaner camping

Forest Service makes move as money-saver; public says it's made some areas better

By MARK FREEMAN  
Mail Tribune Staff Writer

**P**ROSPECT — Roger Marchand's eyes and nose tell him the Union Creek Campground is different this summer than during the previous four vacations he's spent here with his family.

The outhouses typical on the Rogue River National Forest are much cleaner this year at this forest campground along Highway 62.

"It's substantially better, in my opinion," says Marchand, a retired medical school professor who lives in San Diego. "They're being cleaned now every day, while in the past, they'd go two or three days without being cleaned."

"That may not sound like a big thing to someone living in town," he says. "But up here, that's important."

Knowing that the toilets are clean for Marchand and other visitors is important to Rogue Forest officials who this year entrusted the operation of their top campgrounds to a private company.

Faced with a 50 percent slash in recreation money because of a botched budget gamble three years ago, the Rogue Forest hired the Seattle-based Conservation Resources Inc. in March to run Union Creek and several other campgrounds.

The intent was for CRI to provide campers with as good, or better, service than the Forest Service — with the difference being that CRI pays its expenses and keeps any profits.

So far, visitors like Marchand seem to like the way CRI is handling the business of providing camping pleasure.

"That's what they're telling us," says Linda Duffy, who oversees the Rogue Forest's recreation program. "If the people even notice the difference, they liked it."

Duffy has done the recreation officer's version of undercover work by camping in some of the CRI-operated sites throughout the forest. Talking to campers, she's heard mostly praise.

"This is great to us," says Priscilla Crisler, who joined husband Henry in a recent camping spree that led them to Union Creek.

What Crisler likes about Union Creek is the quiet, the large trees, and lack of people.

"We came here to get away from the crowds," she says. "Crowded might be different to you guys than us, because where we go is always so crowded."

While the Forest Service and CRI like what campers like Crisler have to say, what they haven't said is just as important: There's been no inkling of complaints about campground condition or operation.

"Cleanliness — that seems to be one of the bigger things they grade us on," says Mike O'Neal, CRI's Medford-based division manager. "They don't see the change in uniform. They see how clean things are."

CRI operates the Union Creek and Farewell Bend campgrounds near Prospect, as well as

"If the people even notice the difference, they liked it."

— Linda Duffy  
oversees recreation program

campgrounds and day-use facilities at Fish Lake east of Medford and Applegate Lake southwest of Ashland.

O'Neal has hired 10 local people, plus his wife, at \$5.60-\$6.50 per hour, for the 40-hour employee positions for the Rogue Forest.

He doesn't expect CRI to turn a profit operating the Rogue's facilities this year, primarily because of higher start-up costs associated with stepping into a new site. O'Neal previously managed CRI-operated facilities in Utah.

Fees at the local sites didn't change from last year, except for a \$1 hike for recreational vehicle parking at Hart-Tish Park at Applegate Lake.

CRI's agreement with the Rogue Forest runs through the 1992 recreation season, which ends this fall, and the company will renegotiate its agreement annually.

The Rogue Forest's venture into the private enterprise field came rather abruptly this year.

The forest's recreation budget, which used to hover just under \$1 million a year, dropped to \$405,000 for 1992 because of a gamble made by forest officials three years ago during the early stages of drafting this year's budget.

Forest officials set an artificially low base budget for recreation and funneled some of the extra base money toward other programs. Because the Forest Service was known to be stressing recreation programs in the 1990s, Rogue officials figured extra money would be available to make up for programs not funded by the base budget.

That plan backfired. Though extra money was available in Oregon and Washington for facilities construction and wild and scenic river planning, nothing was there for administration and maintenance — two big chunks of the Rogue budget.

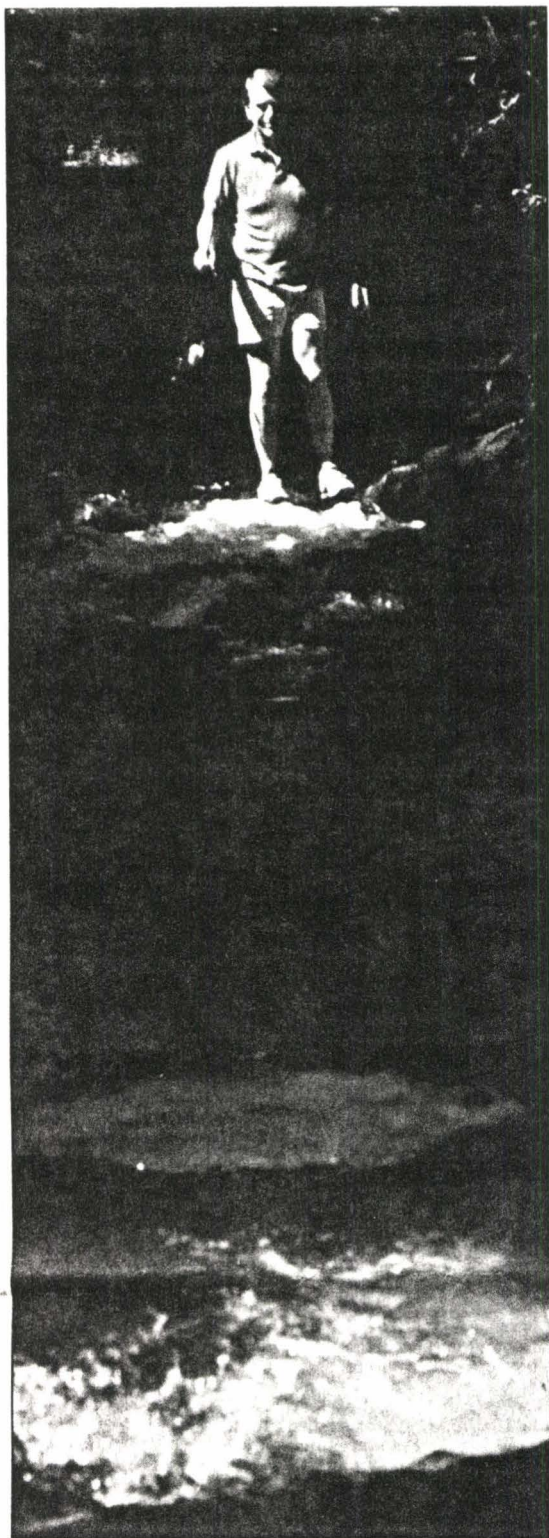
With its recreation budget and staff cut about half, the Rogue Forest faced having campgrounds and picnic areas unkept this summer.

So Duffy took a page from national forests in the eastern states as well as the Umpqua National Forest.

She began looking for a private company to run some of the sites under an agreement in which the company would provide care and operation of the campgrounds — at no cost to the forest but with a chance for the company turning a profit.

Campers like Marchand don't think the Forest Service necessarily did a bad job; it's that CRI does it better.

"I realize the problem they've had," Marchand says. "But this company here at this campground has a conscientious host and he's doing a good job."



Mail Tribune / Bob Pennell

**SATISFIED** — Californian Roger Marchand, a regular visitor to the Union Creek Campground, fishes in the recently stocked creek.

### Cost of Doing Business

A critical element of the Forests' Recreation program is unclear. The Forest does not have a clear financial picture of its cost of doing business. Traditionally, workforce is determined by dollars allocated and workload is determined by workforce hired. An analysis of the costs of doing business will lead to informed decisions about mix of services, about efficient use of workforce, and lead to accurate out-year budget planning. A rough data base was developed in October 1991 for use in decision-making for the FY92 program. A more thorough analysis will be conducted through the Summer months of 1992 for use in the FY93-95 Recreation strategy decisions.

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